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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1.](#) Mideast
- [2.](#) Israeli Politics
- [3.](#) Syrian-Lebanese Track
- [4.](#) U.S.-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

At noon today, Israel Radio reported that at least 640 people who participated in a mourning procession in Baghdad were killed in a stampede that followed a false alert about a suicide bomber.

All media highlighted the press conference (some journalists dubbed it an early election rally) convened by Binyamin Netanyahu on Tuesday afternoon. Netanyahu formally joined the Likud's leadership race, and accused PM Sharon of "betraying Likud ideology" and of defecting to the Left. He appealed to the Likud's 150,000 members to restore the party to power after four years of Sharon's rule. All media reported that former PM Ehud Barak surprised his Labor Party rivals Tuesday when he proposed that all party leadership contenders rally around chairman Shimon Peres. The media say that Barak wants to thwart the aspirations of Histadrut labor federation Secretary-General, Knesset Member Amir Peretz.

Ha'aretz says that a majority vote is expected in the Knesset today on the Philadelphia agreement, which calls for 750 Egyptian police officers to be deployed along the Egyptian side of the Gaza Strip border.

Yediot reported that, according to Washington sources close to the investigation of the assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafic Hariri, unequivocal findings will make the U.S. and France impose sanctions on Syria in the next few days. Yediot, Ha'aretz, and Jerusalem Post reported that several pro-Syrian senior security and intelligence officials were arrested in Beirut Tuesday in connection with the assassination. Yediot cited the belief of GOI sources in Jerusalem that the findings would turn President Bashar Assad into the "leper of the region and bring about his total isolation in the international community."

Jerusalem Post quoted Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman as saying in Gaza City Tuesday that Egypt will continue to support the Palestinians until they establish their state in all territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

Ha'aretz reported that when the separation fence is completed, thousands of East Jerusalem children will have to cross checkpoints to attend school.

Ha'aretz cited the PA's concern over the purchase by wealthy foreign Jews of hothouses belonging to Gush Katif settlers for the PA. The newspaper quoted a Palestinian source as saying: "We received a gift and

we cannot refuse it." The source summed up the position of PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas. Ha'aretz writes that Abbas had agreed to the deal following pressure from Vice Premier Shimon Peres, the Economic Cooperation Foundation, senior State Department officials, and others. The newspaper says that the Palestinian reservations came for political, economic, and social reasons. Maariv reported that the IDF intends to hand over the Gaza Strip's Netzarim area to the Palestinians as early as next week.

All media reported that Defense Ministry D-G Amos Yaron is stepping down from his position. Yediot says that he informed Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz on Tuesday that he will leave his position in mid-September. Yediot quoted Yaron as saying Tuesday that the continued sale of weapons technology to China had not been an attempt to deceive the U.S. Israel Radio quoted Israeli sources in Washington as saying that his departure will pave the way to the resumption of trust between the Israeli defense establishment and the U.S. administration.

Jerusalem Post quoted Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mark Regev as saying Tuesday, following reports that Pakistan may send a high-level delegation to Gaza and Jerusalem, that Israel would welcome such a group. Regev's comments were in response to an article in the Pakistani daily Dawn, which appeared on its web site on Tuesday. However, the Pakistani newspaper had also reported that the move was not a step toward Islamabad's recognition of Israel. Jerusalem Post reported that leaders of the Iraqi Jewish community from around the world will soon meet in London to plan a strategy to demand compensation for lost assets, potentially in billions of dollars, from the Iraqi government.

Yediot reported that Attorney-General Menachem Mazuz instructed Mofaz on Tuesday to immediately stop the employment of Ron Schechner, Mofaz's special assistant in charge of settlements, following the findings of the Sasson report on unauthorized settler outposts.

Leading media cited an announcement released by the Justice Ministry Tuesday, according to which Mazuz has decided not to press charges against a group of Jewish extremists who carried out an ancient curse ceremony ("pulsu denura") meant to place a death wish on Sharon, since the appeal was to God and not to mankind.

Ha'aretz reported that the IDF has appealed the eight-year prison term given to Sgt. Taysir Harb, who was convicted by a military court of killing British pro-Palestinian activist Tom Hurndall, saying in a statement Tuesday that it seeks a harsher sentence.

Maariv reported that positive Israeli characters -- peace activists -- appear in the Egyptian TV film "Agent 1001" that will air during the upcoming month of Ramadan. The Lebanese star Nur plays the part of a left-wing Israeli woman who criticizes Zionism and helps Palestinians.

Yediot front-paged a Mina Zemach (Dahaf Institute) poll conducted Tuesday night:
-54 percent of Israelis (51 percent of registered Likud voters) favor Sharon as the next PM; 21 percent prefer Netanyahu (26 percent of registered Likud voters).

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized:
"Perhaps for the first time in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is agreement among the Americans, Europeans and Israelis over the way forward in ending the conflict in this generation and not in some faraway future."

Former U.S. mediator Dennis Ross wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Gaza disengagement creates an opening, and it will close for Sharon and Abbas unless the [U.S.] administration recognizes where we are, and what is now necessary."

Michael Freund, who was a senior aide to former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, wrote in Jerusalem Post: "It is not enough merely to bring down the government. Rather, Sharon must be seen to suffer a stinging political rebuke, such that it will be obvious to all that the withdrawal led directly to his downfall."

Block Quotes:

I. "The Only Plan"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (August 31): "Things have never been as clear and as focused as they are today. Perhaps for the first time in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is agreement among the Americans, Europeans and Israelis over the way forward in ending the conflict in this generation and not in some faraway future.... The incumbent prime minister has a few months left to make progress in the diplomatic arena. He currently enjoys unprecedented Israeli and international support for his actions. Sharon did not lose his Knesset majority, but he lost his support from his party long ago. As long as a sitting prime minister has a parliamentary majority, he can continue to advance the road map. If he does nothing, he will become superfluous. If Sharon can take advantage of his upcoming trip to the United States to shape additional understandings with regard to settlement blocs on the West Bank; if he accepts Environment Minister Shalom Simhon's offer to give settlers in isolated West Bank settlements -- who want to be evacuated as a community -- a compensation package that would make it unnecessary to evacuate them in the future, he can prove that he still has something to offer and that Israel under his leadership continues to accept responsibility for determining its future and its borders."

II. "Rev Up the Road Map"

Former U.S. mediator Dennis Ross wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (August 31): "The [U.S.] administration must build a bridge to the future. The two sides have very different expectations of what will happen after disengagement: Sharon wants a pause to absorb the emotional trauma, and Abbas wants next steps. Each needs an explanation of what is next. The administration should declare that it will take the moribund road map and negotiate a common understanding on every Israeli and Palestinian obligation. It won't be easy and it will take time. It will take the kind of mediation the administration has avoided until now. But Gaza disengagement creates an opening, and it will close for Sharon and Abbas unless the administration recognizes where we are, and what is now necessary."

III. "A Road Map For the Right"

Michael Freund, who was a senior aide to former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, wrote in Jerusalem Post (August 31): "To be sure, the retreat from Gaza and northern Samaria was a terrible blow, but the perils that lie ahead may prove even more ominous. Israel is essentially slouching its way back to the pre-1967 Armistice Lines, which would endanger the state and its interests. In order to prevent this, the Right must lick its wounds from the Gaza debacle and formulate a strategy aimed at forestalling any future retreats. The time to do so is now because, with a little foresight, we can and will prevent more Jews from losing their homes. Such a strategy should encompass a number of key spheres: political, practical and ideological, and it should not be left in the hands of any one organization to implement. Rather, the various forces must combine their efforts and work in tandem to bring it about. In the political realm, the number-one priority at this stage should be to remove Sharon from power.... It is not enough merely to bring down the government. Rather, Sharon must be seen to suffer a stinging political rebuke, such that it will be obvious to all that the withdrawal led directly to his downfall."

2. Israeli Politics:

Summary:

Political parties correspondent Sima Kadmon wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Netanyahu may have made a small step Tuesday in his bid to head the Likud. But he is still very far removed from the premiership."

Liberal columnist Gideon Samet wrote in Ha'aretz: "If [Sharon] wins the Likud contest, he will kill the peace process.... That is why it would be best if Netanyahu beats Sharon within the lunatic Likud and leads to nowhere a party that has lost its direction."

Block Quotes:

I. "Netanyahu's Circus"

Political parties correspondent Sima Kadmon wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 31): "Netanyahu, who on Tuesday spoke about the corrupt Sharon -- who abandoned the Likud's principles, is threatening to destroy the house, encourages terror, sows illusions, and does not respect democracy -- forgot a small fact: until two weeks ago, during almost five years, he was a senior minister in his cabinet. So, Netanyahu may have made a small step Tuesday in his bid to head the Likud. But he is still very far removed from the premiership."

II. "Sharon's Loss Would Be Israel's Gain"

Liberal columnist Gideon Samet wrote in Ha'aretz (August 31): "Even if Sharon manages to do what appears at the moment like pure fantasy and wins the primaries, he is as good as dead within the Likud. Ahead of the contest, he started to intimate that the disengagement would be the last in his career, and started making ingenuous noises of affection toward the road map that he actually detests. If he wins the Likud contest, he will kill the peace process; if he loses, he will likely take the only path that allows any political movement: quitting, forming a right-and-center party, and forging an alliance with Labor and Shinui, backed by Yahad-Meretz, United Torah Judaism and the Arab parties. This is the move that would best serve the national interest. That is why it would be best if Netanyahu beats Sharon within the lunatic Likud and leads to nowhere a party that has lost its direction."

13. Syrian-Lebanese Track:

Summary:

Arab affairs correspondent Smadar Perry wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "It is hard to believe that there will be a huge outcry in Syria or among its neighbors when Assad is made to pay the bill."

Block Quotes:

"The Lion From Damascus Is Coming Across As a Cat"

Arab affairs correspondent Smadar Perry wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 31): "[President Bashar] Assad made Syria lose its special status in the region.... Assad has lost on all international fronts: President Bush is threatening to place Syria on the economic-diplomatic 'axis of evil' and to topple Assad. The UN is about to blame him for the assassination of former Lebanese prime Minister Rafic Hariri. A propos Hariri -- his brutal elimination killed an investment plan for economic projects in Syria that was funded from the Hariri family's private capital.... Was Assad a partner in the secret plan to eliminate Hariri? Who prepared the list

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of hits? It is hard to believe that there will be a huge outcry in Syria or among its neighbors when Assad is made to pay the bill."

14. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "What is scary ... is that the Americans, when they so wish, can pronounce that black is white ... and the entire [Israeli defense] establishment backs down from them in a panic."

Block Quotes:

"Victim of American Tyranny"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (August 31): "Contrary to what might appear from the media reports, [Amos] Yaron is leaving the Defense Ministry with his head held high. What is slinking submissively, with its tail between its legs, is the State of Israel's sovereignty. One of the best directors general the Defense Ministry has seen, a man responsible for countless projects and huge security deals, is going home as part of a roundabout deal that is intended to put a stop to the Israeli humiliation campaign in Washington and the national Israeli groveling at the Pentagon.... A thorough and comprehensive investigation of all the details related to the crisis with the Americans, a detailed chronology of the crisis from day one, can only lead to one conclusion: Yaron is clean-handed, as is [the Defense Ministry's director of security] Yehiel Horev. A chain of misunderstandings, which fell on ready ears and a basic distrust, became a many-headed monster threatening the strategic relations with the United States. What is scary about the whole story is that the Americans, when they so wish, can pronounce that black is white ... and the entire [Israeli defense] establishment backs down from them in a panic. The American tyranny, which is also expressed in the insane cruelty with which they have been taking revenge on Jonathan Pollard for over two decades, knows how to be crueler than all the dictatorships that we know. That is how it is when they give USD 3 billion a year, and we receive it."

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